



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

# STRENGTHENING YOUR BRAND AND MESSAGING

Dave Coker: Strategic Campaigns, Greensboro Local 947

Darrell Roberts: Strategic Campaigns, Chula Vista Local 2180

**BRAND**

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**History of past actions that  
influence attitudes &  
opinions**



# BRAND

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## Organized Labor Brand Fire Service Brand Intersection of Both



# ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND

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What is the “Union Label”?



# ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND

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# ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND

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Carpenter's 8-Hour League of SF  
(1869)



# ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND

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Cigar Maker's International Union of  
America  
(1880)

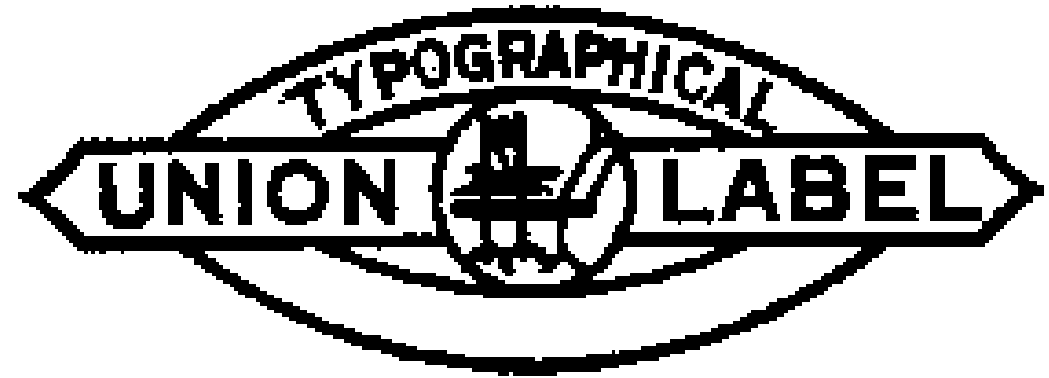
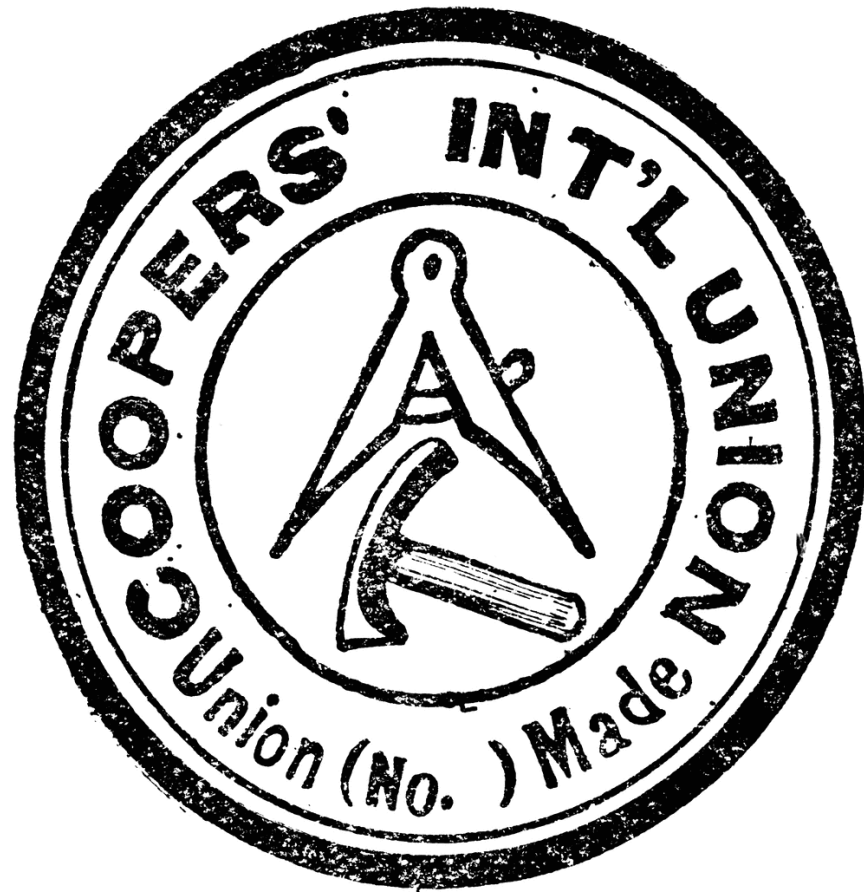


# ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND



# ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND

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# ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND

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Union Label &  
Service Trades  
Department  
(1909)  
[Unionlabel.org](http://Unionlabel.org)



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**Emblematic of a high standard of living, of tolerable conditions of employment, of those conditions surrounding working men and women which makes for a higher and better standard of living.”**

**-William Green, AFL President, 1939**



# CASE STUDY: ORGANIZED LABOR BRAND



# Early “public relations” campaign by unions in the NYC garment industry

**Douglas Boulevard Floral Co.** A. VANDERPOEL, Mgr.  
Phone Kedzie 426  
Res. Phone Kedzie 1230

FLORISTS, DECORATORS AND LANDSCAPE GARDENERS  
Union Label on All Designs 600 Independence Boulevard, S. W. Cor. Harrison St.

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 Named shoes are frequently made in Non-Union factories  
**Do not buy any shoe** no matter what its name, unless it bears a plain and readable impression of this UNION STAMP

All shoes without the UNION STAMP are always Non-Union  
Do not accept any excuse for absence of the UNION STAMP

BOOT AND SHOE WORKERS' UNION, 246 Summer St., Boston, Mass.  
JOHN P. TOBIN, President CHAS. L. BAINE, Secretary-Treasurer

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This label will be found under the sweat band of all Union-made Hats.



It represents a fair wage, sanitary conditions and honest value.

UNITED HATTERS OF NORTH AMERICA  
Martin Lawlor, Secretary-Treasurer, 11 Waverly Place, New York



# INTERNATIONAL LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION



- Founded in 1900, NYC
- Industrial Union
- Membership was largely immigrant women
- Promoted “social unionism”
- Founded the 1<sup>st</sup> union owned health center
- Horrific working conditions prompted efforts to organize



# UPRISING OF 20,000 IN 1909

- 20,000 workers in NYC garment industry walk off the job
- Largest strike of women workers in US history to date
- 11 weeks of bitter street battles
- At the end of the strike, 85% of garment workers are represented.



- Triangle Shirtwaist factory is one of the few non-union factories
- Fire breaks out on floors 8-10
- 146 dead
- ILGWU response is comprehensive:

Support for victim's families  
Workplace safety advocacy  
Organizing efforts  
Public awareness campaign



# LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL CAMPAIGN: 1959

- ILGWU launches new Union Label campaign
- Almost half a million members
- Contracts in place in majority of garment shops in US
- Outsourcing to the South



# LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL CAMPAIGN: 1959



# LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL CAMPAIGN: 1959









# WHAT'S OUR TAKEAWAY?

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- The ILGWU created a decades long **branding** & public relations campaign that was creative, appeared on multiple platforms, and engaged members & consumers
- What is your Local's **brand** among your members and in the community?
- Be bold, be creative, think big when developing and building your **brand**
- The perception of your **brand** has tangible implications for your union's effectiveness





# FIRE SERVICE BRAND



# **FIRE SERVICE BRAND**

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What is the brand of the North American Fire Service?



# FIRE SERVICE BRAND



**OUR BRAND IS A  
PROMISE**

# FIRE SERVICE BRAND

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# FIRE SERVICE BRAND



# FIRE SERVICE BRAND

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*"I can think of no more stirring symbol of man's humanity to man than a fire engine"*

-Kurt Vonnegut



# WE ARE THE **INTERSECTION**

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**We are uniquely positioned in  
organized labor to effectively  
leverage our BRAND:  
Internally and Externally**

# WHAT IS YOUR BRAND?

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- Think about your Local's brand within your fire department
- Think about your Local's brand within your community



# WHAT IS YOUR BRAND?

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The perception of your brand has tangible implications:

- Membership Density
- Membership Engagement
- Community Partners
- Political Wins
- Bargaining Wins



# INTERNAL BRANDING: Group Discussion

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- What do your members think of their union?
- Is your union viewed as a source of solutions?
- Do your union's stated values reflect the values of the members?
- Does your union “culturally connect” with your members?



# **INTERNAL BRANDING**

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## **Cobb County (GA) Local 2563 Case Study**



# INTERNAL BRANDING

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Cobb County Local 2563's brand was shaped by years of contentious relationships and perceived inaction, rather than strategic intent.

- Long-standing contentious relationship with Fire Administration
- Very low membership density across the department
- Rank-and-file perception: the Local was not effective



# INTERNAL BRANDING

- 2023 brought fresh leadership committed to rebuilding from the ground up
- Rebuilding the brand inside the department became the primary objective
- Cobb County's challenge was credibility, not communication



# INTERNAL BRANDING



**IAFF LOCAL 2563**



**COBB  
PROFESSIONAL  
FIRE  
FIGHTERS**

[WWW.JOINCOBBLOCAL.COM](http://WWW.JOINCOBBLOCAL.COM)



# INTERNAL BRANDING



# INTERNAL BRANDING

- “PR Blitz”: 21 emails in 45 days
- “Good Union Jobb”
- Creative & culturally relevant apparel
- Union logo on equipment on every apparatus
- **45 days: 102 members**



# INTERNAL BRANDING

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- In less than 2 months, L2563 entirely changed the perception of their union
- They rebranded & it was deliberate & thoughtful
- They attached their union to the cultural values of the backstep firefighter
- They created a plan, uniform talking points, & went into the fire stations to win hearts and minds



# EXTERNAL BRANDING

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- Gain community support and trust
- Build a coalition of community advocates
- Persuade elected officials
- Control your brand before someone assigns one to your Local

**BRANDING = POWER**



# EXTERNAL BRANDING: IN THE COMMUNITY



# EXTERNAL BRANDING: POLITICAL ACTION



# EXTERNAL BRANDING: Group Discussion

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- Think about what your Local's brand is in your community
- Does your brand exist?
- How can you strengthen that brand? What are tangible steps you can take?



# GROUP EXERCISE

# DEVELOPING A BRAND

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## Purpose

- Why does our Local exist beyond bargaining contracts?
- What problem do we solve for members and the community?

## Values

- Identify **three core values** the Local should always represent (examples: solidarity, professionalism, transparency, service, accountability).

## Identity Statement

- One sentence that captures who the Local is (not a slogan; something leadership could use as a reference point).



# SUMMARY

# SUMMARY

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***Your Local should thoughtfully  
build your brand and jealously  
guard what you build***



# SUMMARY

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**The perception of your brand  
has tangible implications for  
your members**



# SUMMARY

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**There is power in rebranding or developing your brand for the first time. You get to define who you are, what you believe, and what you do.**

*Not your fire chief*

*Not your mayor*

*Not your city/county manager*





## Strategic Campaigns / Comms Deliverables

- Logo Design
- Graphic Design
- Digital ads
- Drafting a communications plan
- Crisis communication
- Media market list
- Newsletter development
- Strategic Planning
- Branding





**DARRELL ROBERTS**

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**THANK YOU!**  
**ANY QUESTIONS?**

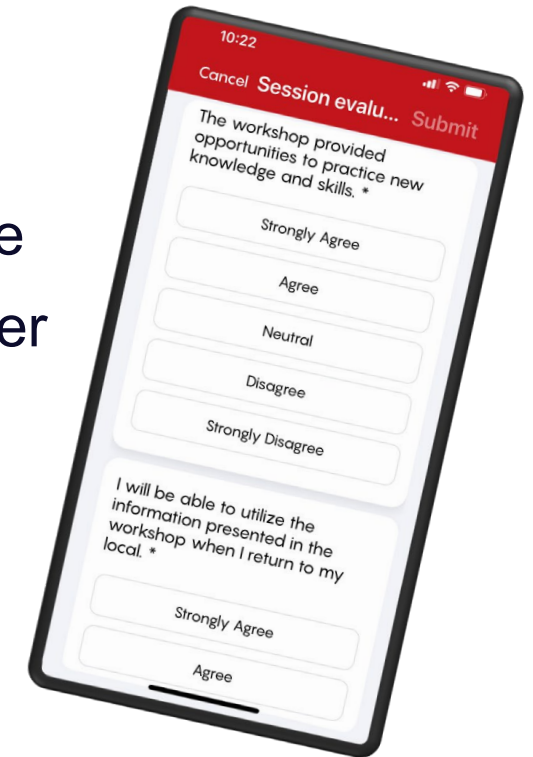


**DAVE COKER**

Strategic Campaigns | dcoker@iaff.org

# EVALUATION AND WIN AN IPAD!

- **Submit your workshop and overall evaluations to be automatically entered in two drawings for a new iPad!**
- **Complete your evaluations using the IAFF app:**
  1. Download the IAFF app and sign in with your iaff.org username
  2. Tap the 2026 Strive for Excellence Summit event image to enter the event's dashboard
  3. Tap "Sessions" and tap on the workshops you attended
  4. Tap "Evaluation" and complete the evaluation
  5. Tap "Submit"



**For the event's overall evaluation, follow steps 1 and 2, then tap "Event Evaluation" located in the event's Dashboard.**

